

SPECIAL MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
December 17, 2012

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Buchanan Auditorium of the Mansfield Public Library.

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Freudmann, Keane, Kochenburger, Moran, Paterson, Paulhus, Ryan, Shapiro, Schaefer

Also Present: Rick Lawrence of Lawrence Associates, Tom DeMauro, of Newfield Construction, Mansfield's financial advisor for debt service Bill Lindsey, Superintendent of Schools Fred Baruzzi, Director of Finance Cherie Trahan, Director of Facilities Bill Hammon.

II. SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT

Town Manager Matt Hart outlined the issues to be addressed at this meeting.

a. Mr. Lindsey presented an overview of the financial implications of staggering construction debt using four different scenarios. These scenarios do not include funds for repairs to the schools. Mr. Lindsey's analysis shows delaying the construction does extend the debt but additional construction and financing cost would be realized.

b. Mr. Lawrence reviewed the requirements for the renovate like new process as set out in CGS§10-282 (18). Mr. Lawrence stated Mansfield, without special legislation, does not meet the qualification which requires not less than 75% of the school building be at least 30 years old. The current reimbursement rate for renovate like new projects is 72.14%, for new construction 62.14%. The guidelines for eligibility were also reviewed including the provision which requires a renovate like new project be certified as less expensive than a new school. Current and planned square footage and state allotted amounts were also discussed.

c. Capital Region Education Council (CREC) estimates they will be able to present an independent analysis of the renovate like new requirements and a proposal to provide peer review services in early January. If the information is received prior to the meeting it will be distributed to Council members and the community.

d. The Town Manager has been in contact with the Town's legislators and is arranging a meeting which will also be scheduled in early January.

e. Ms. Trahan reviewed a summary of the steps and an estimated timeline which would be necessary to submit the grant application by June 30, 2013.

f. Council members agreed the next steps would include presentations by CREC and a meeting with legislators, both to be held in early January.

III. OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

Greg Samuels, Wormwood Hill Road, stated he does not know anyone who supports this project, but if it does happen noted there are no water issues or

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additional land needs at Southeast School. Mr. Samuels is concerned about declining property values if Southeast is closed.

Charles R. Vermilyea, Sr. Middle Turnpike, questioned why the Town needs new schools if the student population is not increasing and commented the whole thing is a lie.

Pat Suprenant, Gurleyville Road, asked the following questions and clarifications:

- The new construction rate has been identified as 62.14%, what is the actual reimbursement rate when the square footage penalty and other factors are taken into account?
- The financing plan shows revenue projections for Storrs Center of \$500,000. Is not this figure only realized after the completion of Market Square, Phase 1C and the layoff of the additional public works personnel hired for the construction phase of the project?
- The financing plan shows the mill rate for the school building project. What would the impact be on the mill rate if all the identified future CIP projects are also undertaken?
- A comparison of Option B and Option E shows the 3 school renovate like new project would provide 154,000 square feet of space at a cost of \$14,000,000 each while the 2 new school option would provide 110,000 square feet of space at a cost of \$8,000,000 per school. Ms. Suprenant asked the Council not to look at only the overall cost of the options but also to look at the number of schools and the total square footage they would provide.

Alison Hilding, Southwood Road, questioned the cost per square foot used by Mr. Lawrence in tonight's presentation (\$400-\$450) compared to a previously used figure of \$800-\$900 for a renovate like new project. Ms. Hilding asked if during the 2008 study of the schools there was an analysis of the structural soundness of the existing buildings.

Bob La Rose, Olsen Drive, asked if since the increase in the mill rate, as presented tonight, is cumulative is the shown decrease also cumulative and is the increase in the mill rate in addition to the existing mill rate. The Director of Finance stated Mr. La Rose's understanding is correct.

Robin Weiner, Birchwood Heights Road, commented the new school option would be built at the expense of running some residents out of Town.

Silvia Dorado-Banacloche, Storrs Heights Road, thanked the Council and stated she is pleased the Council is considering an independent analysis of the work done to date. Ms. Dorado-Banacloche has been concerned with the student projection numbers offered to date since they seem to be based on faulty assumptions and have not been correct in the past.

Robin Weiner, Birchwood Heights Road, agreed with the comments offered regarding the student population projections.

Alison Hilding, Southwood Road, also questioned the student population projections as they were done before the announcement of the tech park and other projects and requested a revaluation of the cost of both options from an independent source. Ms. Hilding would prefer the legislators be invited to a meeting that did not include the presentation by CREC.

Mr. Paulhus left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, asked for the specific reference which identifies \$400-\$450 per square foot as the standard and for a chart showing the breakdown of the square footage in each school. Ms. Wassmundt also questioned why the Town has so much more square footage than the state allows for reimbursement purposes.

Alison Hilding, Southwood Road, asked if there is a difference in the square footage allotted for special education. The Superintendent of Schools reported there is no difference in the allocation of space.

Art Smith, Mulberry Road, asked if anyone has done a study of the schools systems that have applied for variances from the state guidelines and what they have been granted.

Ed Wazer, Maple Road, questioned whether the school building project will drive up our cost per student significantly.

Jim Raynor, Moulton Road, offered the following observations:

- To base a budget on projected net revenue from Storrs Center, which is questionable, is a mistake.
- Delaying the debt until future years makes no sense.
- Since the \$400-\$450 figure is from 2009 material an updated figure is needed.
- People want their small schools.
- He supports the presentation of the CREC report.
- A 2008 report showed all the schools were in about the same state of repair so why do we need to tear down the elementary schools and just update the middle school?

Betty Wassmundt, Old Turnpike Road, asked the Council to listen to the public and asked that the project be sent out to bid prior to Council action on the resolutions.

Charles R. Vermilyea, Sr., Middle Turnpike, believes the call for new schools is driven by real estate developers and outside forces.

Robin Weiner, Birchwood Heights, questioned Lawrence Associates' analysis of the project.

Mayor Paterson declared the public comment session closed. These questions will be answered at the next school building project meeting.

Councilor Shapiro asked for a moment of silence together and asked everyone to think of what happened in Newtown.
A moment of silence was observed.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shapiro moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.
Motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk